

Dave and Vicki Barker
Barker Farm, Inc.
9 Barker Rd
Leeds, ME 04263

Farm Description:

Dave and Vicki Barker are the fifth generation owners of Barker Farm in Leeds. On average, the farm ships 17,500 lbs of class I milk from its 100 cow dairy herd to Agrimark each year. It also provides services to local farmers such as: manure spreading, grass and corn harvesting and equipment repair. When they retire, Dave and Vicki hope to keep Barker Farm in business by passing it onto their sons, Ben and Duncan. (I'm not sure if the projected profit, equity line etc belong here, but perhaps more could be included about the operations of the farm)

Farm Mission and Goals:

In 2004, the Barkers were looking to increase their dairy herd size and to diversify production in order to generate extra income. This would reduce the risk involved in small dairy farming and would enable them to take steps further in creating a retirement account. It would also prepare them layout an estate plan that would enable them to transfer the ownership of the farm to their.

Before applying to Farms for the Future, the Barkers were considering to move to sons beef production and corn silage pellet production. They were also interested in increasing their custom services to area farmers.

Phase One: Exploring the Goals

In 2004, the Barkers applied for Phase One and received business planning assistance. They did beef market research, and found that beef production would be most profitable if sales were made locally. In order to raise beef, they would need to build a barn in which to house them. They also researched grain production and found that they would save \$56 per ton by purchasing land to grow their own. This land would not only allow them to produce their own feed, but would also sustain the creation of a beef herd and the expansion of the dairy herd.

Finally, the Barkers discovered that their corn silage could also be used for pellets in wood stoves. They visited wood pellet manufacturers and found that a demand exists, and production is feasible for the farm.

Phase Two: Implementing Change

In 2005, the Barker's received the Farms for the Future grant to purchase land and build a shelter for their beef. Their total cost, \$141,000, was shared with a USDA-NRCS grant.

The \$85,000 land purchase enabled the Barkers to begin their corn silage pellet production. It also provided space for additional dairy cows and for the beef herd. The Barker farm completed construction of a \$56,000 barn and have began beef production and sales.

Reaping the Benefits:

By producing their own feed, the Barkers have reduced costs and are closer to their goal of maximizing income. Their herd expansion has helped them to improve labor and equipment efficiency, which has also saved them in production costs. Their beef sales will boost their income and give them more assets to pass to their children.

The land for the corn silage pellet production has also allowed the Barkers to begin their wood stove heating pellet business. They have continued to refine the pellets, and are using a SARE grant to do research on the effectiveness of this alternative heating method and renewable energy project.

By expanding and diversifying, the Barkers are closer to maximizing income for their retirement account. They have outlined an estate plan and now have a large dairy, beef farm, and wood stove pellet business to split between their two sons in the future.